

Reuters, January 21, 2009

The U.S. House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee voted on Wednesday to bar Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, charged in a corruption scandal, from touching any money the state would receive from an economic stimulus package.

The state, which is trying to impeach the governor after he was accused of trying to sell President Barack Obama's former U.S. Senate seat, is expected to receive about \$50 billion from the pending \$825 billion federal package, said Rep. Mark Kirk, an Illinois Republican.

The panel approved by voice vote an amendment to the spending portion of the stimulus legislation to put the Illinois legislature in charge of the money unless Blagojevich has been removed from office.

"It strips him of any authority to allocate federal stimulus funds," Kirk told Reuters. "I've already talked to the state legislative leaders. ... They're ready for this."

Earlier this month, the Illinois House of Representatives impeached the governor for abuse of power, clearing the way for a trial in the state Senate, where a conviction by more than two-thirds of its members would result in his removal from office.

The language would have to be approved by the full House and Senate and signed by Obama before it could become law.